



Winter 2009

COUNTY CLIPS

A Newsletter for Employees of Contra Costa County

SPOTLIGHT ON

Department of Child Support Services

See page 4



Boyd Tarin, left, and Mary Lindelof, standing, DCSS attorneys, with Maria Jimenez, child support assistant, and Karyn Field, child support specialist II, help resolve customer issues in Superior Court Department 52

2009 A Year of Change & Opportunity



By Supervisor Bonilla

As the incoming Chair of the Board of Supervisors, I see 2009 to be a year of change, cooperation, and opportunity. We are in the midst of a severe economic downturn not experienced here in America since the 1930's. Our revenues have declined, and are expected to decline throughout 2010, which will impact our County Budget and our ability to serve our constituents.

In addition, we will begin contract negotiations where many difficult options and decisions will have to be made to ensure the sustainability of our service delivery and to provide for our employees. Although some may see this as a prelude to a grim year, I would like to offer a different perspective as I believe 2009 can be the year in which Contra Costa County creates the foundation to succeed in the future.

Our core purpose is to protect and improve the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods, and diverse communities of Contra Costa County. We can meet our core purpose by maintaining safe and caring communities, creating a culture of engagement within our organization, and forming even stronger partnerships with our fellow nonprofit service providers, the faith community, and the businesses in our region. Building a stronger collaborative approach internally and externally is the only way we can hope to meet the increasing needs of our community.

In order to meet these goals, our county budget must be a plan that matches projected revenue with projected expenditures in order to support our organization's strategic vision, goals, and objectives. I believe it is important that we have a county-wide dialogue each year regarding our budget priorities to ensure we are continuing to serve our purpose to the public. This discussion can better inform management, employees, and constituents on the programs and services provided by the County and how we are impacted by the state and federal budget. Furthermore, having a two-year budget cycle can help us prepare for difficult years like the one we are about to enter and keep everyone fully informed on the challenges we face.

Also there are opportunities in this challenging year to revisit basic initiatives that can enhance our organizational culture. We will need to examine our organizational integrity which will expose weaknesses, show the changes that are necessary, and ultimately lead to improvements and strengthening of the County's service delivery. Furthermore, we all can work to emphasize integrity in our interactions. This is a healthy practice that will build trust and develop a culture that fosters deeper commitment, leads to greater job satisfaction, and superior customer service.

I look forward to continuing to serve the County in this coming year and I am always encouraged by the dedication and perseverance that I see in many of our outstanding employees who have dedicated their lives to public service. On behalf of the community that we strive to serve each day, thank you for caring, advocating, and going the extra mile to accomplish our mission.



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Jason Groce and four other Drop-ins case workers conduct approximately 1,000 interviews each month

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Recommendations Please

County Clips is your employee newsletter. Please send us your comments, questions & suggestions.

You can contact us at (925) 313-1183

or email us at pburk@contracostatv.org.

Remember, County Clips can be viewed online at www.contracosta.ca.gov under County Clips.

It is a new year, and we have finally completed our budgets for 2008-09 (almost). It is likely that we will continue to refine the budgets for the next several months as the economy continues to struggle. I want to thank all county staff for your efforts in serving the public in 2008 through these challenging times. Unfortunately, we know that the many challenges we face will not be any easier in the new year.

In 2009 we will be faced with the likelihood of continuing decline in revenues and increased demands for services. State and Federal funding for our programs is not likely to improve in the next few years, as the State and Federal Governments deal with their own budget problems.

"Contra Costa County has a great reputation for delivering quality services to our residents. This can only happen because of the dedication, excellence and innovative thinking that is not the exception, but the norm of our employees"

Besides the obvious need to address OPEB, and Health Insurance Costs, we also need to address our deteriorating infrastructure, upgrade our technology and find additional ways to deliver services in an efficient and effective manor to our constituents. To do so, will require strong community support and involvement not only by all Contra Costa County Departments, but also by the many agencies that work with us to deliver services to the community. While our residents are aware of the State and local fiscal crisis, their expectations of us are not likely to change as quickly as our financial situation. To continue to deliver quality services will take dedication and hard work by all of us. We will need to be sensitive to the needs of the community and they will need to be sensitive to the challenges we face as an organization.

Over the past five months that I have been here, the most common question I have been asked is "why would you want to take on the difficult challenges facing Contra Costa County?" My answer has been that Contra Costa County has a great reputation for delivering quality services to our residents. This can only happen because of the dedication, excellence and innovative thinking that is not the exception, but the norm of our employees.

These are stressful and difficult times, but working with all of you I know we can make a positive difference for our communities. Thank you for your dedication and hard work. I look forward to working with you in the new year.



David Twa, County Administrator

New Assemblymembers for District 14 & 15

Below - Joan Buchanan, Assemblymember District 15, holds a photo of her district with Supervisor Federal Glover and David Twa, County Administrator, on the right at the Assemblymember-elect Welcome Reception at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in November 2008



Above: Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember District 14, meets with County staff at the Assemblymember-elect Welcome Reception at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in November 2008

SPOTLIGHT ON DEPARTMENT OF CHILD



The efficiency and effectiveness of child support in Contra Costa and the state has come a long way since 1999 California legislation transferred child support services from independent District Attorney Family Support Divisions. The new state-directed Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) was charged to develop a statewide automated system while ensuring

uniformity of services for families throughout the state. The state works with fifty-two county and regional child support agencies and the courts to provide financial stability and access to healthcare services to help children grow into healthy, productive adults. Focus is on customer service. State and federal funds continue to fund the child support program. No funds come from the county and all funds collected are distributed directly to the children and families who rely upon them. DCSS continues to provide services to locate absent parents; establish and enforce court orders for paternity, child and medical support; collect and distribute support payments; maintain accounts of payments made and due; and modify court orders when appropriate. Service delivery has improved as California developed a federally-mandated, statewide, automated child support system. All services remain free of charge.

Contra Costa's Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) celebrated in June, 2008, when the California Department of Child Support Services asked DCSS to host a statewide media conference announcing the federal certification of the California Child Support Automated System, under development since 2000. The new system integrates all child support case information for easy access by child support workers in California and with other states' systems. California officials accepted a \$193 million federal rebate for successful implementation and termination of annual penalties totaling over a billion dollars during the system's development. The Federal Child Support Commissioner and directors of California Departments (including Finance, Public Information, the Franchise Tax Board, and Child Support Services) were on hand to acknowledge the historic day. The event recognized DCSS' innovative technology, business solutions, and outreach achieved since

the department's inception. A few of the technologies, including case imaging, PDF report system, electronic transfer of payments to parents, electronic lien filing, and e-mailing monthly notices to customers, have become models for the new California Child Support Automated System.

Beginning in 2001, DCSS developed a strategic plan focused on business redesign, automation to reduce costs and an aggressive public relations campaign. Within a year, all staff received extensive customer service training, reception lost its institutional feel, and a state-of-the-art call center was added. In addition to the technologies used by the state, DCSS initiated acceptance of credit cards for child support payments. Staff productivity jumped with the addition of dual desk-top monitors and single sign-on to log on to computers and access a multitude of systems. Prospective customers get quick, easy, secure access to DCSS no-cost services when they use the new TurboCourt child support application, developed by DCSS and business partner Intresys, to open a child support case.

Working closely with the courts and the Family Law Facilitator, DCSS also partners with the Family Law Section of the Bar Association, Employment and Human Services, the Workforce Development Board and Workforce Services, housing providers, the Parenting Task Force, fatherhood coalitions, CCTV, Comcast, and private agencies. The partnerships have produced several highly successful workshops and conferences.

All of the changes, with a dedicated, professional staff, have produced an 18% increase in collections in spite of a nearly 50% reduction in staff. Collections reached \$58,737,104 in 2007-2008. Each month, 155 staff members handle 35,856 cases and process 1,100 applications for service. Four attorneys and legal support staff prepare and handle 400



During the statewide media conference announcing federal certification of the California Child Support Automated Child Support System, Federal Commissioner Margo Bean listens to DCSS Director Linda Dippel's remarks.



SUPPORT SERVICES

cases per month in Superior Court Department 52. Legal documents filed in-house monthly, average 550 with 210 forwarded to court for filing. Customer service has dramatically improved. Wait time in reception has dropped from over two hours to under 15 minutes, while telephone wait time has dropped from 45 minutes to less than 10 minutes.

DCSS has received several awards since its inception. The most recent was the Positive Collaboration Award presented at the 2008 state conference to Contra Costa, Shasta, Sierra Nevada and Butte Counties and the California Department of Child Support Services in recognition of the immediate response to the emergency situation in Butte County due to the catastrophic wild fires that raged throughout the county during the summer of 2008. Linda Dippel, DCSS Director, facilitated the relief effort and DCSS' Call Center handled over 500 Butte County DCSS customer calls. The 2007 Center for Digital Government's Best of California "Demonstrated Leadership in Solving Business and Policy Problems through Technology" was awarded to Ms. Dippel. Twice the state and once the National Child Support Enforcement Association have honored DCSS for Outstanding Program Awareness. Other awards have recognized outstanding performance and innovative technology.

State and federal funds continue to fund the child support program. No funds come from the county and all funds collected are distributed directly to the children and families who rely upon them.

In August, at the request of the Federal Commissioner of Child Support, two representatives from the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) toured DCSS. In addition to preparation and administration of the national budget, OMB helps in the formulation of the government's overall program, and aids in improving interagency cooperation and overall government effectiveness.

Through four conversions and staff reductions, DCSS' staff has demonstrated their commitment to the families and children of Contra Costa County.



Far left: Reception lost its institutional feeling and a children's play area was added.

Shopping cart ads, television and other outreach methods promote DCSS' no-cost child support services.

Danielle Smith speaks to a customer. Approximately 7,500 calls are received each month in the call center where 14 staff respond to 75% of the calls in less than 10 minutes.

Come Visit the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary's, "The Hall Closet"

Since 1968, the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary has manned and operated a thrift store, the Hall Closet. In June 2005, we moved from our downtown

Martinez location of 23 years to an uptown spot, the old Juvenile Hall Administration wing. We painted, decorated and spread our many donations throughout our new home. Our loyal customer base has slowly been making their way to our new retail spot and our new neighbors have been greatly receptive.



We are a 501 c-3 non-profit organization, so all of your donations are tax-deductible. If you are considering donating, we accept gently used household items, clothes free of rips and stains and small furniture (limited space). Any item you think we could sell we take. Electronics in working order only. (No computer equipment.)

We accomplish two goals with our thrift store. One is to raise much needed funds for our programs such as youth scholarships and special one-time projects. The second is the store serves the community and our Juvenile Hall population. When children are released from Juvenile Hall and need clothes for school, court or a job interview, they can simply walk over and receive items at no cost.

The Hall Closet is currently open on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and the first Saturday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Our goal is to add an additional day or hours to our current days. If you are interested in helping or have questions please call Shannon Grosenheider at the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary (925) 957-2718 or e-mail to admin@jhaux.org. We are currently seeking volunteers who can sort donations, hang clothes and aid in the organization of our current array of great "stuff." Your commitment could be as little as 2 hours per week, but any amount of time would be greatly appreciated!

Volunteer Opportunities with CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

If you or someone you know is looking for a way to make a

difference in the community, consider volunteering in one of Contra Costa County's departments. Two departments with a number of different volunteer programs are the Employment and Human Services Department and the Health Services Department. Other departments that need volunteers are the Animal Services Department, the County Library, the Probation Department and the Sheriff's Department. For more information, visit the County's website at www.contracosta.ca.gov and look at the various department sites for volunteer opportunities.

Strengthening the Bond between the Community & Government



Children select books to take home as part of the CSB Reading is Fundamental book distribution, during The Week of The Young Child this past April, at the George Miller III Center in Richmond.

Community Services Bureau (CSB) is the largest childcare provider in the County, serving over 2,000 low income children 0-5 years of age, pregnant women, and their families each day. The Community Services Bureau serves as the federally designated “Community Action Agency” for Contra Costa County and is part of the national “Community Action Partnership” network of over 1,100 agencies that work to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in communities throughout the United States. CSB also operates the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides financial assistance to individuals and families having difficulty paying their energy bill as well as weatherization services to ensure that their homes are using energy efficiently.

CSB operates federally-funded Head Start and state-funded early childhood education programs, which deliver childcare services through 19 directly-operated childcare centers and 11 childcare partners spanning from Richmond and North Richmond to Oakley and Brentwood. 16 of the 19 centers have been accredited through NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children), a pillar of quality in the early care and education community. A home based option is also available to families, providing home education and support services to children and their parents in the home. Over 100 families benefit from this option. CSB’s Home Start program provides the same home based services in the homes of exempt child care providers. Over 4,000 nutritious meals are prepared and delivered to the centers each day through CSB’s central kitchen, located in Richmond. In 2008, CSB began providing Stage 2 CalWORKS and CAPP (Alternative Payment Program) childcare services to an average of 650 children each month.

LINK+ Contra Costa County Library’s Newest Service

Can’t find the book you’re looking for in the Contra Costa County Library’s computer catalog? The Library is pleased to announce the addition of LINK+ as the newest service for our library customers.

LINK+ is a cooperative partnership among 42 public and academic libraries across California and Nevada that will allow our customers to browse over 9 million books in the LINK+ Catalog. This self-initiated service allows Contra Costa County Library cardholders to borrow books not available from Contra Costa County Library from a participating LINK+ Library.

This service is free and generally provides faster service than the Library’s traditional Interlibrary Loan Service. Library customers place their requests online with no paper forms to fill out. Requests can be placed from the library or remotely from home or office. The progress of a request can be monitored at any time using your personal LINK+ account. Automated processes manage the requests and route them to the appropriate library for pick up.

Links are available from the Contra Costa County Library Catalog to the LINK+ Catalog for easy navigation. Books will generally arrive at the requested library within one week and will be held 7 days for pick up and checkout. The items are loaned for a period of 21 days, but customers may request renewals online for an additional 14 days if no one is waiting for the material.

Get online and get linked up!

Contra Costa County Library Logo Has a New Look

The Contra Costa County Library recently revised its logo to have a more contemporary look that incorporated the Web address and the Mission Statement, Bringing People and Ideas Together.



CCHS EMS Division Launches Nationally Recognized Heart Attack System

Contra Costa Health Services' Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) launched last month the STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) System, which allows paramedics to rapidly identify and transport high-risk heart attack victims to specially equipped hospitals designated as STEMI Centers. The new system sets a new standard of cardiac care and could save hundreds of lives in our county. Contra Costa now has five STEMI Centers, which can activate their cardiac catheterization teams in under 60 minutes when they partner with pre-hospital providers. The STEMI Centers are: Doctors San Pablo, John Muir Medical Center – Walnut Creek, John Muir Medical Center – Concord, Kaiser Walnut Creek and San Ramon Regional Medical Center. As other hospitals develop their cardiac programs, they will be eligible to join. EMS' next step is to work with the STEMI Centers to launch a public information campaign encouraging the public to call 911 at the first sign of heart attack symptoms.

DTV is Coming

(And Sooner Than You Think)

At midnight on February 17, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format (signal received by antenna) and broadcast only in digital format.

For more information about the digital transition:

Call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) (voice) or 1888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) (TTY) or Go To www.dtv.gov

Will My Analog TV Still Work?

After February 17, 2009, you will be able to receive and view over-the-air digital programming with an analog TV only by purchasing a digital-to-analog set-top converter box. Until March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be able to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes.

If you have an analog TV and already subscribe to cable or satellite service, contact your provider about any additional components, such as a digital set-top box, that you may need to watch digital broadcasting programming.

For more information about converters and coupons:

Call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY) or go to www.dtv2009.gov



Health Care Workers Take a Walk on the Artistic Side

Forty staff from Contra Costa Health Services shared their artistic sides with the community at the third annual "Healthcare Workers as Creators" on September 25 at the Regional Medical Center. About 150 people attended the event, which featured musical performances, artwork and crafts by CCHS employees and included a silent art auction to benefit recent CCRMC residency graduate Kinari Webb's Health In Harmony program in Indonesia. Dr. Alan Siegel led the organizing efforts for the event, which was sponsored by ArtsChange, the nonprofit organization that grew out of the Richmond Health Center's Quilt of Many Colors Project.



CCRMC Emergency Department Reports Dramatic Changes

Across the country, health systems are grappling with the issue of how to handle staggering increases in emergency department visits and recently, our Board of Supervisors heard how the Emergency Department Flow Team at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center is dealing with the issue. Dr. David Goldstein, Chief of Emergency Medicine, and Peter Fromm, Interim ED Nurse Manager, described an approach they've been developing for several years that is now the standard operating procedure: no waiting room, immediate brief triage by a nurse and rapid access to a physician. This new flow model has resulted in marked improvement in the time from door to doctor evaluation, shorter Emergency Department stays, and a significant reduction in the number of people who leave without being seen. 2008 Board Chairman, Supervisor Federal Glover, said the improvements are happening because "we have leaders with vision and people on the floors are helping."



District Attorney Headquarters

County Departments Relocate

The new District Attorney Headquarters Building was officially dedicated on July 22, 2008, after an 18-month construction process. The building is four stories in height and boasts approximately 52,000 square feet of useable space. It is now home to almost 150 of the District Attorney's 185 staff members.

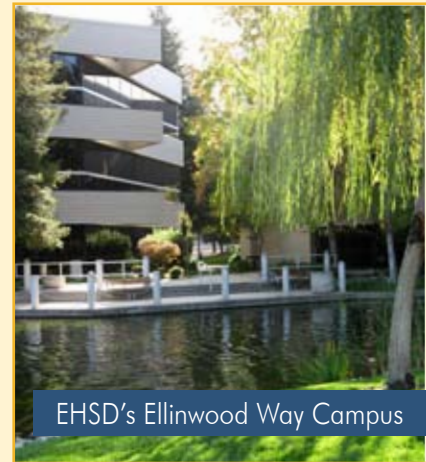
On October 17, 2008, the aging Employment and Human Service Department's (EHSD's) offices at 30 and 40 Muir Road in Martinez closed. For years, these offices served central county residents who needed to apply for the public assistance programs such as: CalWORKs, Welfare-to-

Work, General Assistance, Medi-Cal and Food Stamps. The Muir Road offices housed about 265 employees, which also included Children and Family Services social workers, In-Home Supportive Services Payroll, VESTIA volunteers and Advocacy.

Monday afternoon, October 20th, EHSD opened to the public in 3 beautiful buildings located at 300, 400 and 500 Ellinwood Way in Pleasant Hill. Employees are thrilled with their new surroundings, but better yet, EHSD is now more centrally located, near the I-680 corridor. The Ellinwood Way Campus is served by County Connection Bus Route #109, and is more easily accessible for persons with disabilities.

Phase two of the EHSD move and consolidation occurred over the Halloween weekend. About 100 more staff from other EHSD locations in Concord and Martinez made the move. From Martinez: the In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority from 1330 Arnold Drive and the In-Home Supportive Services social workers and Medi-Cal workers from 2530 Arnold Drive came over. From Concord: FS Quality Control, Office of Appeals, Welfare Fraud Investigations from 1470 Enea, and Information Technology technicians and networking from 2377 Stanwell, joined the new Ellinwood family.

And EHSD isn't done yet! In January, the Workforce Development Board and Small Business Development Center from 2425 Bisso Lane in Concord will also move into the Ellinwood Way offices. It will be the culmination of a consolidation plan that has been in the works for over 1 ½ years, which will ultimately save the department thousands of dollars, and better serve the residents of Central County who come to EHSD for help.



EHSD's Ellinwood Way Campus

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are designed to help workers with personal problems that may be adversely affecting their on-the-job performance. The confidential services include counseling, mental health assessment and referrals, workshops on topics such as time management and relaxation, and legal and financial assistance. These services are free with up to three (3) counseling sessions per calendar year. Spouses and dependent children up to age 21 are also eligible. To schedule an EAP appointment call (925) 930-3661 or from outside Contra Costa call 1 (800) 930-2040. For questions or to leave a voicemail, call (925) 930-4403.

Spare the Winter Air

This winter, between November 1 and February 28, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) will be announcing Spare the Air Alerts, during which time the use of wood-burning devices – including fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits – is illegal. However, people who burn wood as their only source of heat may be exempt from the regulation.

First-time violators will receive a warning letter from the BAAQMD with information about the new rule. Residents who violate the no-burn provision a second time could receive a fine ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending upon the severity of the infraction. Residents should check before they burn wood by calling 1877-4-NO-BURN or by visiting www.sparetheair.org.



Green Actions Make Good Business Sense for Food Bank

The final phase of the rooftop solar panel project for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano (located at 4010 Nelson Ave., Concord) has been completed with exceptionally bright results. Through funding from the County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and other generous local foundations and governmental jurisdictions, the Food Bank now has a state of the art installation that is both saving them money and helping to protect the environment. The entire project was completed in June 2008, and the Food Bank's energy bill for the month of July 2008 was less than 4 percent of their energy bill in July 2005 - \$3,800 vs. \$143. The Food Bank expects its yearly energy bill to be reduced from about \$44,000 to only \$6,000.



The entire roof of the Food Bank's warehouse is now producing enough electricity to cover the great majority of its warehouse energy needs, and the money saved by the project is being efficiently utilized by our food and nutrition programs. The solar panels generate enough electricity to power over 7,500 homes for one day, and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted from five cars driven for over 10 years.



County Fleet adds 100th Hybrid Vehicle

The General Services Department recently announced acceptance of the 100th hybrid electric vehicle into the County Fleet. Commissioning the Toyota Prius into service marked a major milestone in "greening" the County

fleet. Contra Costa County started using hybrids in 2001 and has since then racked up over 4.5 million miles in hybrid vehicle operation.

Hybrid electric vehicles (HEV) are ultra-efficient, gasoline powered vehicles that also have a small supplemental electric motor powered by batteries. The supplemental electric motor also powers the vehicle to increase fuel economy. Unlike pure electric vehicles, these do not require a plug-in to recharge the batteries. The batteries are charged by normal operation of the engine and by braking.

The most common HEVs in the County fleet are: the Toyota Prius, the Honda Civic, and the Ford Escape. The majority of these HEVs average almost 40 miles per gallon in normal operation. This is approximately twice the fuel economy of standard gasoline-powered County sedans. The County Fleet saved over \$70,000 in fuel expenses and eliminated 237 metric tons of vehicle exhaust emissions in 2007 just by using the fuel efficient hybrid electric vehicles.

However, hybrid electric vehicles are only a single aspect of the County's multi-faceted plan to "green" the Fleet. A recently revised Administrative Bulletin establishes tough, low emission standards for County vehicle purchases and requires alternative fuel and hybrid vehicle purchases. The County is also aggressively expanding its use of renewable bio-fuels such as biodiesel and E85 ethanol and has increased the fleet of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles by 50% in the last six months. These measures are all focused on reducing vehicle emissions and fuel consumption in order to enhance efficiency and lower costs to the County.

Recycling Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs)

Since California passed the 2003 Electronic Waste Recycling Act, fluorescent bulbs and other e-wastes must not be discarded in the trash but taken to authorized recyclers. These are Contra Costa County's Household Hazardous Waste Facilities:



WEST COUNTY

101 Pittsburg Ave., Richmond
1-888-412-9277

www.recyclemore.com

Thur-Fri & 1st Sat of each month 9-12, 12:30-4

CENTRAL COUNTY

4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez
1-800-646-1431

www.centalsan.org

Tues-Sat 9am-4pm

EAST COUNTY

2550 Pittsburg-Antioch Hwy., Pittsburg
1-925-756-1990

www.ddsd.org

Thurs-Sat 9am-4pm

Fluorescent bulbs/tubes can be stored for up to a year before they are taken to an authorized recycler.

Emergency Drill at EOC

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services Division at 50 Glacier Drive in Martinez recently fired up for Silver Sentinel 2008. The exercise scenario was a 6.9 earthquake along the Hayward fault. The exercise "began" 48 hours after the earthquake allowing emergency managers and staff to focus on logistical and recovery issues and challenges. More than 60 responders and staff from numerous county departments participated in the four-hour exercise. New County Administrator, David Twa, took part as the EOC Director and oversaw the entire exercise. The exercise allowed staff to test plans, procedures and response in preparation for an actual incident or event.



Drainage Maintenance

The County is asking for your help in managing your community's drainage system this winter. Many problems occur during the winter when debris accumulates in creeks, streams, and ditches. This debris can be swept away by rainstorms and can block downstream drainage facilities causing storm water to overflow into the street and onto private properties that are below street level. Similar problems are encountered in private yards where creeks and ditches flow into pipes under lawns and other improved surfaces.

While we can't stop the rain, it is possible to control, to a degree, the accumulation of debris and sediment in drainage channels and to reduce the potential for flooding. Some of the debris results from the natural processes of decay and erosion. Other debris, such as lawn clippings and brush cuttings, is generated by human activity.

What can you do?

You can help prevent potential flooding by taking the following precautions:

Throughout each fall, and especially before the first winter rain, check all drainage channels, driveway culverts and other drainage pipes, ditches, and swales on and around your property and remove any debris and sediment that could cause blockages.

Each fall, check to see that all drainage pipes within or adjacent to your property have unobstructed entrances and exits. Clear any debris and silt to ensure free passage of storm runoff.

If your property is located in an unincorporated area of the county and you are unsure of your responsibility regarding the maintenance of a particular drainage facility on or near your property, call the County Public Works Department at (925) 313-7000. If your property is located within the city limits, please call the city Public Works or Engineering Department.

The County has the maintenance responsibility for: (1) drainage pipes within the public road right-of-way which carry water from one side of the street to the other, and; (2) drainage pipes within an easement offered to and accepted by the County for maintenance purposes. All other drainage facilities are the responsibility of the private property owner to maintain.

The County Ordinance Code includes provisions that require a property owner to obtain a permit before doing work that would affect the flow of storm waters or existing drainage patterns. Permits are required for any work that would impair, impede, redirect or other-wise affect the existing flow of storm waters, or other waters.

While debris cleanup is a maintenance activity that does not normally require any special permits, please be aware that if you plan to use mechanical equipment (tractor, backhoe, etc.) to do the clean up, or if you plan in any way to alter an existing drainage channel (alteration could be in the form of a slide repair, a fill, a redirection of a channel, etc.), you may need a permit from the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board, in addition to a permit from the County. Again, if in doubt, do not hesitate to call (925) 313-7000.



When Are Building Permits Required?

The California Building Code, which is state law and adopted by Contra Costa County as an ordinance, states “a permit is required when: any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or

structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.”

This definition is very broad but there are exceptions such as fences less than 6' in height, painting and wall papering, sidewalks, driveways and small tool sheds and playhouses (under 120 square feet). However, even some of these items may trigger the need for a building permit. For example, if the 6 foot fence is placed on top of a retaining wall or the tool shed is intended to be placed next to a property line then a building permit will probably be required. To make certain whether your project needs a building permit, the safest course of action is to consult the building department for the area where you live.



Christopher Schoen, Building Inspector I, in the center of photo, assists family and their contractor with building permit process.



Electronic Deposit Permits



completely eliminated. The Treasurer-Tax Collector's office (TTC), working in conjunction with the Auditor-Controller's office (AC) and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT), is nearing the completion and implementation of an Electronic Deposit Permit (EDP). This web-based application will provide local agencies the ability to submit a Deposit Permit right from their workstation. In this current era of making the most with what you have and doing more with less the EDP application will allow the County to improve efficiency while also reducing costs.

Last year, Contra Costa County received the software application for EDP's from Kern County at no cost. Although the price was right, the software did have its limitations. DoIT, in collaboration with the TTC and AC, conducted a detailed analysis of the software. Together, these departments concluded that the software provided tremendous potential to the County and it could also be configured to meet the TTC and AC's needs. It is inexpensive and easy to use.

The EDP system has evolved from the basic platform provided by Kern County to a system that has far exceeded initial reviews. A steering committee comprised of representatives from the TTC office, AC office and DoIT have combined their skills, knowledge and experience to dynamically produce a synergy which has brought this automated system closer to reality with each day. This steering committee has been working diligently to produce a final product that will benefit the County by saving time through automation, create greater standardization and accounting controls while reducing costs of various outsourcing services and increasing productivity. The EDP system also includes the potential for increased revenues through efficiently utilizing banking and/or investment services.

Automating the process of recording deposits to the County Treasury has been contemplated among various county departments for many years. Excel and similar programs have made the work easier for employees to create a deposit permit on their computer but the procedure has long remained as a manual, costly, paper-based process. The EDP system automates a majority of the procedures required for recording, depositing and posting receipts to the AC finance system.

The TTC office, on behalf of the steering committee, welcomes your feedback on the EDP system. We encourage you to email questions you may have, or comments you would like to express to treasinfo@tax.cccounty.us. If you have not already received the emailed information regarding EDP and subsequent survey, you can visit the TTC website at www.cctax.us under the Treasurer's Information > County Use Only headers for this and further information.

Congratulations on a Job Well Done

In October, Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) Director Linda Dippel received the highest award presented at the 2008 California Child Support Directors Association in Anaheim, California. The lifetime achievement award acknowledged that "Linda has proven herself an inspirational leader, a master at maximizing results with limited resources, a technology innovator and an outspoken champion for the child support program. She has demonstrated an uncommon willingness to share her knowledge, her skills and her resources with any and all who could benefit."

The County Library and Contra Costa Television (CCTV) were finalists in the Western Access Video Excellence (WAVE) Awards Sponsored by the Alliance for Community Media, Western Region, for the video program *Politics in the Age of YouTube*. CCTV's community issues program *Demolition of Golden 7 Liquor Store* was also a WAVE Award finalist.

Congratulations to EHSD's Lisa Sweet, recognized as an "Angel in Adoption" by Senator Dianne Feinstein in September 2008!

The Contra Costa County Library is proud to announce that they received two first place awards in the California State Library (CLA) 2008 PReXcellence Awards competition. CLA's PReXcellence Awards honor libraries from throughout California for their marketing and publicity plans and promotional materials. Chosen from a broad range of creative pieces and from various size library budgets, the two first place awards were:

- Less than \$5 million library budget: The Lafayette Library for their fundraising campaign materials for the new Lafayette Library & Learning Center.
- \$10 million plus library budget: *Library-a-Go-Go*, the Library's automated book dispensing machine located at the Bay Point-Pittsburg BART station.

On September 24th, Congressman George Miller III received the 2008 Ladybird Johnson Head Start Heroes Award in Washington, DC. The award was presented at a reception on Capitol Hill with several members of the Head Start community present to share in the celebration which was part of the Annual National Head Start Leadership Conference. Congressman Miller has been a wonderful advocate for children and a great friend to the Community Services Bureau's program as well as children and families nationwide. Please join us in wishing him congratulations on this outstanding award.

At a Food Stamp conference held 9/10 and 9/11 in Sacramento, Contra Costa County was awarded a Recognition of Excellence from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for contributing to the historically low food stamp error rate. For Federal Fiscal Year 2007, the national average was 5.64%, the State of California's rate was 5.31% and Contra Costa's rate was 1.84%. Additionally, Contra Costa County received a certificate from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for a Payment Accuracy Rate of 98.16% for the same period.

In August the Public Works Department was re-accredited by the American Public Works Association. Re-Accreditation indicates a commitment to continuous improvement in the delivery of public works operations and services to the community. Accreditation is recognition that a department's policies, procedures and practices have been evaluated against nationally recognized management practices, and meet or exceed the established standard.

Contra Costa County received a Merit Award in the 2008 California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Challenge Awards for the Keep the Delta Clean Program. Contra Costa County programs receiving Honorable Mentions in the 2008 CSAC



Challenge Awards were: Children Exposed to Domestic Violence – DVD; Contra Costa County's Rides to Success Program; Contra Costa County Streamlined Program; The Incredible Years Program; Pet Emergency Preparedness Program; Planner by Appointment Program and the Response to Intervention Collaboration Program.

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Keith Richter received a letter of thanks from Pat Kerschen, Incident Commander, of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Incident Command Team 10 for the county's roll in responding to the Shasta Lightning Complex fires. The Incident Commander stated that "The 'can do' approach and professionalism displayed by all personnel assigned to this incident was impressive. Many resources stayed engaged for over 36 hours before their first break and at times were assigned tactics not commonly carried out by Type I and II Engine Strike Teams."

This year the County Public Defender's Office and the County Sheriff's Department coordinated their efforts to educate jail inmates about their voting rights. The Contra Costa Times reported that "...Contra Costa County Public Defender David Coleman says it is a common misconception that people who have been convicted of a crime cannot vote." The Times also stated that "In California, voting rights are denied only to people in state prison or who are on parole on Election Day. Those in county jails or on probation are eligible." In its article, the Times praised the departments for setting a good example for other county jail systems.



Employee Wellness Program

The Contra Costa County Employee Wellness Program offers Quarterly Wellness Newsletters; Health Screenings and Assessments; Health Fairs; Discounted Health Club Memberships; Annual Fun Run and Walks; Voluntary Blood Drives; Weight Management Programs; and Wellness Challenges. The benefits of Employee Wellness Programs help to educate and increase awareness of a healthy lifestyle and increases self-esteem. The County benefits from the Wellness Program by having healthier employees who are more motivated and take less time off. For more information, contact the Wellness Program at (925) 335-1750 or by fax at (925) 335-1749. Wellness Works!

